



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2019

No. 187

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

God, the fountain of every blessing, in this Thanksgiving season, we praise Your Holy Name. May the lives of our lawmakers please You. Inspire them to walk in Your ways, keeping Your precepts with such integrity that they will glorify Your Name. Incline their hearts to Your wisdom and provide them with the understanding they need to accomplish Your purposes.

Lord God, let Your mercy protect our Senators from the dangers of this life, as they learn to find delight in receiving Your approval. Keep them ever mindful of life's brevity and the greatness of their work.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate for 1 minute as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, probably a lot of my colleagues know I have had a quarter-century interest in legislation dealing with foster care and the foster care system. This is National Adoption Month, and while recent data

from the Department of Health and Human Services show improvements for kids in foster care, it is clear that there is still work to be done.

In 2018, the average length of stay in foster care increased to over 19 months. We need to take that statistic as movement in the wrong direction. Less than half of the kids who exited foster care were reunited with their parents. Our goal ought to be to reunite them with their parents when it isn't harmful to the kids, but what I have also learned over the last 25 years from talking to kids who are in foster care, being shunted from home to home, school to school in the same school year—I have heard from them, “I would like to have a mom and dad,” and “I would like to have a permanent home.”

I have taken that to heart, and legislation that I have worked on helps with that issue. All children deserve a permanent home, and they deserve caring, consistent adults to nurture and guide them. As long as I serve in Congress, I will continue to work toward that goal.

Also, during this month of November, National Adoption Month, I hope people will take a special concern about kids who are in foster care.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, Washington and the cable news channels have spent the week fixated on House Democrats' impeachment hearings.

A few months ago, Speaker PELOSI was saying she was not “for impeachment” unless it was “bipartisan.” But even after the resolution codifying the Democrats' unfair process received zero

Republican votes, the House plowed ahead anyway, searching for a way to arrive at an outcome the Democrats literally predetermined years ago.

Meanwhile, the American people are still waiting for Washington Democrats to stop blocking crucial bipartisan legislation. I spoke yesterday about the USMCA, the landmark trade deal that experts say would create 176,000 American jobs. For 9 months, Speaker PELOSI has told the press every couple of weeks that she will allow a vote soon. Last winter, she was “optimistic”; over the summer, “We want to pass this bill”; this fall, “becoming closer”; and a couple of weeks ago, “I think we are close.”

We have had months of this stalling. Now we are 1 week out from Thanksgiving, and there is still no tangible sign—none—of progress from the House. If the House cannot pass the USMCA this year, there is no way they will be able to claim that the people's business has not taken a back seat to impeachment.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, the USMCA is not the only important legislation Democrats are holding up. As if neglecting the first major update to North American trade policy in a generation were not enough, they are also on track to break a nearly 60-year tradition of passing a bipartisan Defense authorization bill.

Passing the NDAA is one of Congress's most basic governing responsibilities. It authorizes and assures the ongoing missions of our Armed Forces and the resources the Department of Defense needs to carry them out.

Every year since 1961, these goals have been enough to get Members across the ideological spectrum to

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S6725

come together and deliver a comprehensive, bipartisan piece of legislation—but not this year, at least not yet.

House Democrats are so intent on picking fights with the White House that they decided to play partisan games with our Armed Forces. They passed a fully party-line NDAA—not one Republican vote—for their House version on the floor. I believe it is the first time ever that either Chamber has passed a purely partisan NDAA.

The House, on a partisan basis, also included many provisions that aren't even in the jurisdiction of their Armed Services Committee. Even in conference, House Democrats are holding germane provisions hostage in order to secure partisan, nongermane provisions that literally have nothing whatsoever to do with our national security.

Their demands to treat the NDAA like a gift basket to liberal interest groups is imperiling the passage of this important legislation. We are talking about demands like a new taxpayer-funded benefit for all Federal employees and burdening farmers, ranchers, small businesses, local airports, and community water utilities with expensive new environmental liabilities—all kinds of domestic policy changes that were not in the Senate's bipartisan version and have no business bringing this crucial process to a halt.

The Senate did things the right way. We passed a bipartisan NDAA back in June, just as we do every year. That is a credit to Chairman INHOFE, Ranking Member REED, and the rest of the Senate Armed Services Committee. It was a thoroughly bipartisan product, debated out in the open.

But House Democrats literally went off the rails. The House Rules Committee afforded floor debate only on a single substantive Republican amendment while they jammed through their own partisan priorities. They passed a totally partisan NDAA with zero Republican votes—none. Now they are risking the entire conference committee to insist those partisan demands wind up in the end product.

Enough is enough. The USMCA and NDAA cannot be clearer examples of bipartisan legislation that would make our country stronger.

Our Democratic friends said that they want to do more than just impeach. They say they came to Washington to do more than pick fights with the President. Well, in the next days and weeks, we will find out if they mean it.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2920

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I understand there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the title of the bill for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2920) to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Dan R. Brouillette, of Texas, to be Secretary of Energy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 347.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Eric Ross Komitee, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of New York.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the

Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Eric Ross Komitee, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of New York.

Mitch McConnell, John Boozman, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, Mike Rounds, Thom Tillis, Roger F. Wicker, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Kevin Cramer, John Hoeven, Rob Portman, Dan Sullivan, Chuck Grassley, Richard Burr, John Thune, Roy Blunt.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 353.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of John L. Sinatra, Jr., of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of New York.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of John L. Sinatra, Jr., of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of New York.

Mitch McConnell, John Boozman, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, Mike Rounds, Thom Tillis, Roger F. Wicker, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Kevin Cramer, John Hoeven, Rob Portman, Dan Sullivan, Chuck Grassley, Richard Burr, John Thune, Roy Blunt.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 478.